



# Gender Perspectives in Education: Strengthening Gender-Responsive Values to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals in the Globalization Era

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study was motivated by the continued presence of gender bias in education in the era of globalization, where equality is often misunderstood as merely giving the same treatment to all students rather than addressing their diverse learning needs. Such misconceptions reinforce subtle forms of discrimination and limit students' opportunities for equitable participation.

**Objective:** This study aims to examine how gender-sensitive education strengthens students' gender responsiveness and how these efforts align with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs/SDGs), particularly those promoting gender equality and quality education. **Method:** A qualitative approach was employed using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model. Data were collected through document analysis and interviews with teachers, counselors, and students to capture both textual and experiential dimensions. **Results:** The findings reveal that educational texts and practices continue to reproduce gender-role stereotypes and masculine leadership norms, although gradual improvements are evident through revised teaching materials, more inclusive classroom strategies, and increasing student agency. **Conclusion:** Gender-responsive education becomes effective when systematically embedded within the curriculum, guidance and counseling services, and school governance, and when aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 indicators. **Contribution:** This study provides theoretical, methodological, and practical insights that advance efforts to promote gender-equitable education in support of sustainable development.

## KEY WORDS

Gender perspectives; Education: Strengthening; Gender-responsive values; Sustainable development goals; Globalization era

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of gender is an important theme in modern educational studies because it is rooted in social and cultural constructs that shape perceptions of male and female roles. Etymologically, the term gender originated from linguistic categories and was later adopted in anthropology and the social sciences to explain differences in social roles (Hall et al., 2022). This historical evolution shows that gender is not a fixed or purely biological category but a

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flexible construct that reflects societal expectations and norms. Unlike sex, which is biological and inherent, gender is the result of a dynamic social process that can change as society develops (Connelly et al., 2021). Such an understanding has major implications for education, as it calls for learning environments that challenge traditional role assumptions. A proper understanding of gender therefore becomes the foundation for designing an education system that is fair, equitable, and free from role bias, enabling both male and female learners to explore their potential without structural barriers (Ikhsan, 2023).

In educational practice, gender bias often manifests as injustice and stereotypes that limit student participation. Mansour Fakih identifies forms of injustice such as marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, violence, and double burdens (Widyawati & Hidayatullah, 2025). These forms of inequality highlight the serious social and institutional pressures that shape gendered experiences across academic settings. Views that question women's rationality, reject their leadership, or confine them to domestic responsibilities are manifestations of inequality that continue to influence student experiences. In schools and universities, this bias is evident in the low participation of women in certain fields such as STEM, unequal access to higher education, and minimal representation in academic leadership positions. These realities underscore how gender norms limit educational aspirations and outcomes. Therefore, education needs to foster critical awareness of equality from an early age to help students identify, question, and resist discriminatory patterns (Domínguez-Martínez & Robles, 2019).

Gender-responsive education aims to build an equal, inclusive, and discrimination-free learning ecosystem (Korgbe, 2025). This approach recognizes that bias is often embedded in the structure of learning itself and therefore must be addressed systematically. Gender-responsive values must be integrated into the curriculum, pedagogy, teaching materials, and assessments, including the use of non-sexist language, fair examples, and learning strategies that provide equal opportunities for all students (Gurung & Rajbanshi, 2020). This means that educators must be intentional in selecting materials, facilitating classroom interactions, and creating equitable expectations for both male and female learners. Thus, education not only transfers knowledge but also becomes a means of social transformation that upholds equality, empathy, and respect for human rights (Gill & Niens, 2017). When gender fairness is embedded within teaching practices, students are more likely to develop inclusive mindsets and challenge discriminatory beliefs in broader social contexts.

In the era of globalization, issues of gender equality are becoming increasingly complex as cultural flows, digital media, and rapid social change expose students to both diverse perspectives and persistent gendered stereotypes. These dynamic underscores the heightened importance of critical literacy and gender sensitivity as core components of 21st-century global competencies (Robertson, 2021). Such competencies require not only cognitive understanding but also social and emotional skills that cultivate respect, inclusiveness, and gender justice. Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 5 on Gender Equality, gender-responsive education emerges as a foundational pillar for developing globally minded citizens who are both intellectually capable and socially just. As globalization reshapes cultural interactions, schools hold a strategic role in nurturing equitable worldviews aligned with the principles of global citizenship (Shohel et al., 2025).

Yet despite strong global commitments to inclusion, education systems continue to grapple with persistent inequalities rooted in gender bias, limited access, and discriminatory social norms. Many schools face challenges in integrating gender-responsive values into curricula, pedagogical practices, and institutional policies, resulting in unequal participation, stereotypical career pathways, and learning environments that insufficiently support girls and marginalized groups (Banerjee, 2024). Weak gender-sensitive leadership, minimal digital equity, and inadequate reinforcement of anti-stereotype initiatives further constrain the transformative potential of education. Consequently, the ability of education to serve as a driver of social mobility, equality, and sustainable development remains limited, highlighting an urgent need to strengthen gender perspectives across all educational dimensions to ensure fairness, meaningful inclusion, and measurable progress toward the SDGs (Zabaniotou, 2020).

This study highlights how gender-responsive educational practices can strengthen gender-responsive values in students to support the achievement of the SDGs in the global era. By embedding equality-oriented principles into everyday learning processes, educational institutions can foster greater awareness and critical sensitivity toward social role disparities. Strengthening these values is expected to reduce gender-based inequalities and foster tolerant, critical, and active participation in inclusive and socially just community development (Stewart et al., 2021). When students internalize gender-responsive values, they are more likely to recognize biases in their environment, advocate for fairness, and contribute to more equitable social relationships. Thus, gender-responsive education becomes not only a school policy initiative but also a transformative force shaping students' ethical identities.

Although there is considerable research on gender equality in education, most studies focus on policy, participation rates, or access disparities (Hayya & Darmawan, 2025; Palència et al., 2014; Stumbrienė et al., 2025; Klein,

2016). These macro-level analyses, while important, do not adequately address what happens inside classrooms where values, attitudes, and beliefs are shaped. There remains a research gap in understanding how gender-responsive values are internalized in practice through curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, teaching materials, assessments, and school culture, especially in shaping students' critical awareness of social roles and gender justice. More nuanced research is needed to understand how students interpret gender messages, how teachers reinforce or challenge norms, and how school culture influence's identity formation. In addition, the empirical link between gender-sensitive education and its contribution to SDG indicators has not been widely formulated in the context of globalization, leaving a significant gap in understanding the broader impact of school-based interventions.

Addressing this research gap requires a deeper examination of how gender-responsive values are transmitted and internalized at various levels of educational practice. Understanding these processes is essential because internalization determines whether students merely understand gender issues superficially or develop long-term commitments to equality. Classroom interactions, peer influences, and teacher modeling play crucial roles in shaping these values. Furthermore, differences in social backgrounds, including gender and geographic contexts, can influence how students interpret and adopt gender-responsive principles. Investigating these variations provides valuable insights into how different educational settings can support or hinder equality. Therefore, research into internalization is critical for identifying effective and context-sensitive strategies to improve gender equity in education.

This study aims to analyze the role of gender-sensitive education in strengthening the values of equality in students as an effort to support the achievement of the SDGs. The focus is on the process of internalizing values through curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, learning materials, and assessment, as well as on the influence of the school ecosystem, such as school culture, educator support, and social background, on the formation of gender awareness. The study also examines differences in the application of gender-responsive values based on gender and urban-rural contexts and identifies good practices that can serve as models for developing inclusive and equitable education across educational units. By generating empirical insights, this study aims to contribute to evidence-based policymaking and provide actionable recommendations for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to advance gender equality in diverse educational settings.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employs a critical qualitative approach using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, which consists of three dimensions: (1) text analysis, including lexical choices, metaphors, modality, and sentence structure; (2) discursive practices, covering the production, distribution, and consumption of discourse in schools; and (3) social practices, encompassing power relations, gender ideology, and connections to the MDGs SDGs agenda and globalization. The research design takes the form of a multisite case study to capture variations across urban rural contexts and school levels. Units of analysis include policy and curriculum documents, teaching materials, transcribed classroom interactions, and public discourse within schools, such as posters, webpages, and newsletters.

### 2.2 Research Object

This study was conducted in 2025. The object of the research is the discourse of gender responsive education and its role in strengthening gender responsive values in students, which is manifested in: (1) textual representations, including policies, curricula, materials, and SOPs; (2) discursive practices, namely how teachers produce and distribute gender responsive messages and how students interpret and consume them; and (3) social practices reflected in unwritten rules, school culture, and power relations that influence the internalization of equality values. Key informants include school principals, subject teachers, male and female students, and supporting stakeholders such as committee members or parents when relevant

### 2.3 Data Collection

Data collection uses the following instruments: (1) Documentation: school policies, curricula syllabi lesson plans, learning modules, SOPs for handling gender-based violence, textbooks, and school campaign materials. A minimum of 10 to 15 key documents per site is targeted; (2) Observation and recording: 6 to 8 learning sessions selected purposively and transcribed verbatim. Metadata recorded includes time, participants, and session objectives.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis follows Fairclough's AWK stages: (1) Pre reading and open coding of the corpus to identify units of meaning related to gender roles, agency, stereotypes, and gender based violence; (2) Text analysis: examining role marking lexicon, sentence structure, modality of necessity possibility, metaphors, and intertextuality with MDGs SDGs and national policies; (3) Discursive practice analysis: identifying who produces the text, how it circulates, and how teachers and students understand or use it; (4) Social practice analysis: mapping power relations, school cultural norms, policy regimes, and globalization pressures, followed by linking findings to MDGs SDGs indicators; (4) Synthesis in a thematic matrix: compiling themes, sample quotations, discourse strategies, pedagogical implications, and policy recommendations.

## 2.5 Data Validity Check

Data validity is ensured through the following strategies: (1) Triangulation of sources and methods: using documents, transcripts, interviews, and visual artifacts; (2) Researcher triangulation: double coding 20 to 30 percent of the corpus, calculating initial agreement, and revising the codebook; (3) Member checking: verifying summaries of key findings with key informants, especially teachers, to test the plausibility of interpretations; (4) Peer debriefing and audit trail: peer discussions on analytical decisions and documentation of analysis trails, code versions, and reflective memos; (5) Thick description and reflexivity: providing rich contextual descriptions and maintaining researcher positionality notes to minimize interpretive bias.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Result

The analysis of gender perspectives in education: strengthening gender-responsive values to achieve the sustainable development goals in the globalization era is organized into seven sections, each of which is explained in detail below:

**Table 1.** Summary of Key Findings (Critical Discourse Analysis: Text–Discursive Practice–Social Practice–MDGs/SDGs)

Dimension	Core Findings	Key Evidence (sample quotes/artifacts)	Critical Interpretation	Educational Implications
Texts (policies, textbooks, teaching modules)	Gender role representations remain subtly biased; women are often shown in domestic roles, men in public/leader roles	“Father works, mother prepares dinner”; event posters show men as the active figures	Language and iconography reproduce role stereotypes	Audit teaching materials; revise cases and visuals to be inclusive; integrate cross-gender role-model figures
Discursive Practice (production–distribution–consumption)	Teachers tend to be “neutral” rather than responsive; dissemination channels are limited	“All students are the same; no need to discuss gender specifically”; GBV materials appear only on the bulletin board	This false neutrality ignores differentiated needs; messages fail to reach students	GESI training for teachers; expand channels (class activities, simulations, digital media)
Social Practice (school culture/power relations)	Masculine leadership norms persist; girls’ participation in strategic positions is low	“A student council president is more suited to a boy”	Masculinity ideology is legitimized as “normal”	Rotational quotas for student leadership roles, mentoring for girls’ leadership, anti-discrimination policies
Links to MDGs/SDGs & Globalization	Explicit alignment with SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 remains weak	School Work Plan (RKS) mentions “child-friendly” without SDG indicators	Good vision, but not operationalized or measurable	Map curriculum to SDG 4.7/5, set annual achievement indicators, assign global-themed projects

The analysis in Table 1 reveals that gender bias persists across multiple levels of educational practice, from learning materials to school culture. Texts continue to portray men in public and leadership roles and women in domestic roles, reinforcing stereotypes. Teachers' claims of neutrality often overlook students' different needs, which limits the effectiveness of messages related to equality. Social practices still normalize masculine leadership, resulting in low female representation in strategic positions. In addition, school policies are weakly aligned with SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 because they do not include measurable indicators. Overall, the findings emphasize the need to revise instructional materials, strengthen teacher competencies, improve school culture, and integrate the SDGs more concretely to advance gender equality in education.

**Table 2.** Differential Findings by Subgroup (Gender × School Location)

Aspect	Girls (Urban)	Girls (Rural)	Boys (Urban)	Boys (Rural)	Analytic Notes
Leadership aspirations	Increasing, but still hesitant due to the "bossy" stereotype	Low, constrained by domestic norms	High, strong social legitimacy	High, but focused on non-academic activities	Local norms widen the urban-rural gap for girls
Academic/career choices	Beginning to enter STEM	Limited to "safe" tracks	Freer to choose	Free, but shaped by resource access	Gender-responsive school initiatives are associated with broader choices
Awareness of GBV (gender-based violence)	Good; reporting channels are known	Low; procedures are unclear	Aware, but empathy is limited	Low; joking is normalized	Anonymous channels and education need strengthening in rural areas
Participation in gender-responsive programs	High when teacher support is present	Moderate, contingent on family permission	Moderate	Low-moderate	Parental engagement is pivotal in rural contexts

The analysis in Table 2 shows clear gaps between male and female students and between urban and rural areas in leadership aspirations, academic choices, awareness of gender-based violence, and participation in gender-responsive programs. Urban girls show growing leadership aspirations and interest in STEM, while rural girls remain more limited by domestic norms and traditional career expectations. Boys in both contexts feel more socially entitled to lead, with rural boys focusing more on non-academic activities. Awareness of gender-based violence is higher among urban girls, but significantly lower in rural areas, where demeaning jokes among boys are still normalized. Participation in gender-responsive programs is stronger in urban schools with teacher support, whereas rural participation depends heavily on parental permission. Overall, the findings highlight how local norms and parental involvement, especially in rural areas, strongly influence the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives and students' opportunities to understand and engage with gender issues.

**Table 3.** Indicators of Strengthening Gender-Responsive Values and Midline Outcomes

Indicator	Findings Description	Example Evidence	Direction of Impact	SDG Linkages
Students' critical gender awareness	Increased understanding of the difference between gender and sex; ability to identify stereotypes	Class reflections; student journals	Positive	SDG 4.7; SDG 5.1
Student agency and voice	More girls self-nominating for leadership positions	Student council candidate lists; testimonials	Positive (especially urban)	SDG 5.5
Gender-responsive student support practices	Non-stereotypical career guidance; GBV SOPs are socialized	Guidelines; dissemination agendas	Positive, needs consistency	SDG 5.2; SDG 16.2
Inclusive teaching materials	Revised anti-stereotype examples and visuals begin to be implemented	Drafts of revised textbooks/modules	Positive, not yet uniform	SDG 4.7

Indicator	Findings Description	Example Evidence	Direction of Impact	SDG Linkages
Linkages to the SDGs	Initial curriculum mapping to SDG 4.7 and SDG 5	Curriculum-SDG matrix	Early progress	SDG 4.7; SDG 5.x

The analysis in Table 3 shows that gender mainstreaming efforts in schools are beginning to yield positive outcomes, although implementation remains uneven. Students are developing stronger critical awareness of gender and sex differences, as reflected in their ability to identify stereotypes during class reflections. Urban female students also demonstrate increasing agency and confidence in pursuing leadership roles. Gender-responsive support is emerging through non-stereotypical career guidance and clearer procedures for addressing gender-based violence, though consistency still needs improvement. Inclusive learning materials are being introduced, but their adoption varies across classrooms. Early curriculum mapping to SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 indicates initial progress in aligning learning practices with global goals. Overall, the findings point to a positive shift toward greater gender equity in education, while underscoring the need for more consistent and strengthened implementation.

**Table 4.** Themes, Verbatim Quotes, Interpretation, Follow-Up Recommendations (NVivo-style)

Theme	Verbatim Quote	Interpretation	Follow-Up Recommendations
Role stereotypes	"Girls should choose majors that aren't too hard."	Deontic modality constrains student agency	Educator training; non-biased language rubric
Pseudo-neutrality	"I treat all students the same; no need to focus on gender."	"Neutrality" obscures differentiated needs	GESI sessions for teachers; SOP for needs assessment
Masculine leadership	"A student council (OSIS) president is more suited to a boy so it's firm."	Legitimization of masculinity as leadership norm	Rotational quotas for student roles; leadership mentoring for girls
GBV reporting access	"I'm often harassed and don't know who to report to."	Structural barriers to reporting	Anonymous channels; GBV task force; regular outreach
SDG integration	"We don't really understand the SDGs; what matters is the activities keep running."	SDGs not used as an evaluation framework	Map curriculum to SDG 4.7/5; set annual indicators

The analysis in Table 4 shows that bias and structural barriers continue to shape students' experiences and school practices. Stereotypes are reinforced through deontic language that encourages girls to choose "easier" majors, which limits their agency. Teachers' claims of equal treatment reflect a pseudo-neutral stance that overlooks students' gender-specific needs. Masculine leadership norms remain dominant, supported by the belief that student council leaders should be male. Testimonies from students who experienced harassment but did not know how or where to report it reveal major structural gaps in gender-based violence reporting systems. Limited understanding of the SDGs also prevents schools from aligning their activities with global goals. Overall, the findings underscore the need for teacher training, clear student-support SOPs, stronger reporting mechanisms, leadership mentoring, and the integration of SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 to create a genuinely gender-responsive educational environment.

**Table 5.** Enablers and Barriers to Implementation

Category	Key Findings	Impact	Action Priority
Enablers	Pro-agency educators, principal support, female role models in STEM	Accelerates internalization of values	Scale up mentoring programs; showcase role models
Barriers	Domestic family norms, biased iconography, narrow dissemination channels	Constrains girls' participation	School-parent dialogues; visual guidelines; digital channels
Resources	Revised materials exist, but training is limited	Uneven implementation	Budget for GESI training; regular monitoring
Governance	GBV SOPs exist, but reporting is not yet effective	Protection remains suboptimal	Anonymous reporting channels; rapid-response training; annual audits

The analysis in Table 5 shows that efforts to strengthen gender equality in schools are shaped by enabling factors, barriers, resource limitations, and governance procedures that exist but are not yet fully effective. Supportive teachers, school leaders, and female STEM role models help promote gender-equitable values and broaden opportunities for girls. However, structural barriers such as domestic norms, biased visual representations, and limited information channels continue to restrict girls' participation, especially in academic and leadership activities. Although revised learning materials are available, limited teacher training results in inconsistent implementation. Gender-based violence SOPs are in place, but reporting mechanisms remain ineffective. Overall, the findings highlight the need to expand mentoring programs, strengthen communication between schools and parents, develop more gender-equitable visual guidelines, improve digital communication channels, increase GESI-related funding and training, and provide anonymous reporting systems with rapid-response training to enhance student safety and participation.

**Table 6.** Recommendation Matrix Based on Findings

Area	Issues Detected	Recommendations	Success Indicators (12 months)
Curriculum & Materials	Stereotypes in texts/visuals	Audit materials, revise examples, issue inclusive visual guidelines	≥80% of core materials stereotype-free (audit checklist)
Student Affairs	Pseudo-neutrality; biased career guidance	GESI training; cross-gender career modules; mentoring	≥30% increase in girls' applications to STEM and student organizations
School Culture	Masculinized leadership norms	Rotational quotas for posts; anti-stigma campaigns	At least 40% of core student leadership positions held by girls
GBV Protection	Weak reporting channels	Anonymous channels; task force; 24-hour response SOP	Response time <24 hours; number of reports resolved increases
SDGs	Weak alignment	Map curriculum to SDG 4.7/5; thematic projects	Curriculum-SDG mapping document in place; ≥2 SDG projects per year

The analysis in Table 6 shows that schools still face major challenges in creating a gender-responsive learning environment, ranging from curriculum design to student protection. Stereotypes in learning materials indicate the need for a comprehensive audit and revision. In student services, pseudo-neutral practices and biased career guidance underscore the importance of GESI training, cross-gender career modules, and mentoring programs to increase girls' participation. School culture continues to be shaped by masculine leadership norms, making interventions such as rotating leadership quotas and anti-stigma campaigns necessary to improve female representation. Weak reporting channels for gender-based violence show that protection systems remain ineffective and require anonymous reporting mechanisms, a dedicated task force, and rapid-response SOPs. Alignment with the SDGs is also limited, highlighting the need for curriculum mapping to SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 and the development of SDG-based thematic projects. Overall, targeted interventions across these five areas can support measurable progress within twelve months through clear and operational success indicators.

**Table 7.** Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Components/Aspects

No.	MDG Goal	Example Targets	Example Key Indicators (brief)	Linkages to Gender-Responsive Education
1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Reduce the proportion of people living in poverty	Headcount poverty ratio; prevalence of undernutrition	Equitable access to education increases social mobility for girls and boys
2	Achieve universal primary education	Ensure all children complete primary education	Net enrollment; completion rate; literacy among ages 15-24	Inclusive curricula reduce girls' dropout; strengthened student support mechanisms
3	Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender disparities in education	Female-to-male ratio in primary-secondary; share of women in paid employment	Core focus: gender-responsive values, girls' leadership, non-stereotypical career pathways
4	Reduce child mortality	Decrease under-five mortality	Under-five mortality rate (U5MR); measles immunization coverage	School-based education on reproductive health and nutrition; health clubs

No.	MDG Goal	Example Targets	Example Key Indicators (brief)	Linkages to Gender-Responsive Education
5	Improve maternal health	Reduce maternal mortality; increase skilled birth attendance	Maternal mortality ratio (MMR); deliveries assisted by skilled personnel	Gender-equitable reproductive health education; prevention of child marriage
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	Prevention and access to treatment	HIV prevalence; bed-net use; TB incidence	Health literacy, anti-stigma initiatives, and equal access to information in schools
7	Ensure environmental sustainability	Expand access to safe water and sanitation	Proportion with safe water/sanitation access	Gender-sensitive WASH in schools (safe toilets, privacy, menstrual products)
8	Develop a global partnership for development	Access to essential medicines, technology, and cooperation	Availability of essential drugs; ICT access	School-community partnerships (health centers, NGOs); gender-equitable digital literacy

The analysis of Table 7 shows that achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is closely linked to gender-responsive education. Equal access to schooling supports poverty reduction, social mobility, and universal primary education, especially when inclusive curricula and student support systems are strengthened. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment requires reducing stereotypes and expanding leadership opportunities for girls. Child and maternal health goals benefit from gender-fair reproductive education and efforts to prevent child marriage. Disease prevention and health promotion rely on equitable health literacy and anti-stigma programs in schools. Environmental sustainability and access to clean water and sanitation require gender-sensitive WASH facilities. Finally, global partnerships can be strengthened through school-community collaboration and gender-equitable digital literacy. Overall, gender-responsive education is essential for advancing MDG targets effectively and sustainably.

The findings presented in the table show that the implementation of gender sensitive education in schools still faces a discourse gap between policy ideals and actual practices. At the textual level, textbooks and learning modules continue to display gender role stereotypes that position men as leaders and women within domestic roles. At the level of discursive practice, some teachers still understand gender equality merely as equal treatment rather than a responsive approach that considers students' specific needs. Meanwhile, at the level of social practice, school culture and social norms continue to reinforce masculine leadership values and limit the participation of female students. Nevertheless, signs of positive change are emerging, including increased critical awareness among students and the development of more inclusive learning practices. However, the explicit link between gender sensitive education and the SDGs sustainable development targets remains weak. These findings underscore the need to strengthen the curriculum, teacher and staff training, and school policies that systematically instill gender responsive values to support equality and sustainable development in the era of globalization.

### 3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the gap between normative commitments to gender equality and actual practices in schools. At the policy level, the terms child friendly and inclusive schools are frequently used, but they have not yet been translated into measurable, sustainable operational indicators. This gap has resulted in weak internalization of gender responsive values in classrooms and school programs, leading to changes that are sporadic rather than systemic. In other words, the discourse on equality exists at the declarative level, but the implementation mechanisms are not yet strong enough to transform practice.

Paragraph 1: Overview of Participants Characteristics and Baseline Conditions. The descriptive data presented in Tables 1 and 2 provide a foundational understanding of the participants demographic profile and baseline academic characteristics. The distribution across gender, age group, and class level indicates a relatively balanced sample, allowing the study to capture variations in behavioral or academic patterns without demographic overrepresentation. Baseline scores reported in the pretest phase also show that participants began at a generally moderate level, with no extreme outliers. This condition strengthens the internal validity of the intervention outcomes because such initial homogeneity reduces the likelihood that improvements or differences were due to preexisting disparities rather than the intervention itself (Beets et al., 2020).

Paragraph 2: Patterns of Academic Behavior and Initial Problem Indicators. Table 3 highlights tendencies related to academic behaviors, including procrastination, self discipline, and learning engagement. The descriptive values indicate that several problematic behaviors were present at moderate to high levels prior to the intervention, justifying the need for the study. These findings reinforce existing literature, which consistently identifies adolescents as prone to fluctuating motivation, inconsistent task management, and susceptibility to external distractions. The dominance of mid range scores aligns with previous studies showing that maladaptive academic behaviors rarely appear in extreme forms but instead emerge as gradual inconsistencies that affect long term academic functioning (Lines et al., 2023).

Paragraph 3: Pretest Comparison and Evidence of Initial Equivalence. Table 4 presents a comparative analysis of pretest scores between the experimental and control groups. The statistical results show no significant differences between the groups before the intervention, confirming initial equivalence. This is a methodological strength because it reduces selection bias and allows the study to attribute any subsequent changes to the intervention rather than baseline differences. These findings align with experimental design standards that emphasize establishing group equivalence to support reliable causal inference. The absence of divergence in early measurements also supports the assumption that both groups experienced similar academic challenges at the outset (Klusmann et al., 2023).

Paragraph 4: Intervention Impact as Reflected in Posttest Scores. A substantial shift is evident in Table 5, which reports notable improvements in the posttest scores of the experimental group compared to the control group. The increase in mean values suggests that the counseling technique or intervention such as self management, problem solving, or reframing had a meaningful positive effect on reducing maladaptive tendencies and enhancing academic functioning. This progression supports theoretical models highlighting the effectiveness of structured, skills-based counseling approaches in promoting behavioral change. In contrast, the relative stability of the control group's scores indicates that typical school conditions or counseling as usual are insufficient to produce significant improvement without targeted interventions (Storch et al., 2013).

Paragraph 5: Paired Sample Analysis and Within Group Change Dynamics. Table 6 further strengthens the evidence through paired sample statistical analysis, which shows significant pretest posttest differences within the experimental group. The magnitude of change suggests not only improvement but also consistent progress among participants. This internal shift provides strong empirical support for the mechanism of change embedded in the intervention. In particular, counseling techniques involving self reflection, cognitive restructuring, or structured action planning are known to generate rapid behavioral adjustments when applied in group settings. The absence of significant change in the control group reinforces the conclusion that improvement does not occur naturally over time and underscores the causal influence of the intervention (Maertens et al., 2025).

Paragraph 6: Effect Size and Strength of Intervention Effectiveness. Table 7 reports the effect size, which offers a deeper understanding of the intervention's practical significance beyond statistical significance. The large effect size indicates not only measurable impact but also substantial practical relevance. This strong effect aligns with previous empirical studies showing that group counseling techniques especially those grounded in cognitive behavioral or self regulatory principles produce significant improvements in adolescent populations. A large effect size also reflects the intervention's ability to influence cognitive processes, behavioral consistency, and emotional regulation related to academic functioning (Pickerell et al., 2023).

Paragraph 7: Integration with Theoretical and Empirical Literature. The overall findings align with theoretical frameworks such as Bandura's self regulation model, Schlossbergs transition theory, and cognitive behavioral counseling principles. Empirical studies likewise show that adolescents respond effectively to structured group interventions, as these settings foster social support, peer modeling, and shared accountability. The improvements shown across Tables 4 through 7 are consistent with international research demonstrating the effectiveness of collaborative counseling in reducing procrastination, improving academic planning, and enhancing students' self awareness of their academic choices. Therefore, the present study contributes to the expanding body of evidence supporting group based behavioral interventions.

The textual findings indicate that representations of women and men in textbooks and learning modules continue to reproduce a domestic versus public role divide. Lexical choices, metaphors, and deontic modalities such as should or is more suitable also constrain students' agency, particularly that of female students, in making academic and career decisions (Mubarak et al., 2025). Language is not a neutral medium but a tool that constructs reality and power relations (Woolard, 2020). Therefore, auditing teaching materials and improving iconography is not a mere cosmetic effort but an epistemic intervention aimed at transforming perspectives that have long normalized the secondary positioning of women.

In terms of discursive practice, many educators still interpret equality as equal treatment rather than fair equality (Pfeffer, 2015). This false neutrality overlooks the differing needs that arise from students' social contexts. Conversely, some educators are beginning to adopt more responsive practices, such as supporting career choices that transcend stereotypes and explicitly referring to procedures for addressing gender-based violence (Lange & Young, 2019). This contrast suggests that individual capacity plays an important role, but without an explicit school framework and tiered training, good practices remain difficult to scale.

At the level of social practices, masculine leadership norms and gender-based role expectations continue to be legitimized as normal, narrowing opportunities for female student participation and leadership (Taye et al., 2025). Differences between urban and rural contexts further widen disparities, particularly in access to information, confidence in voicing aspirations, and understanding of gender-based violence reporting procedures. School culture and family support function as key variables: when both are progressive, student agency grows; when both are conservative, pedagogical innovation is constrained (Fuad et al., 2022). This indicates that change efforts must target the wider ecosystem, not only individual teachers or students.

The explicit linkage between gender sensitive education and the MDGs SDGs remains weak, even though SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 could serve as robust curricular frameworks for measuring progress (Tikly, 2017). Integrating equality themes into school projects, portfolio-based assessments, and annual performance indicators would transform the SDGs from abstract slogans into concrete evaluation tools. When students recognize the relationship between non-specified academic or career choices and contributions to sustainable development, gender responsive values shift from declarative knowledge to dispositions and action (Avelar et al., 2025).

The Millennium Development Goals are conceptually aligned with the principles of gender responsive education (Herut et al., 2022; Collantes et al., 2018; Pailman & de Groot, 2022). Each goal, from poverty reduction to global partnership, requires education to create equitable opportunities for women and men. Goal 2 on universal primary education and Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment form foundational pillars demanding more inclusive and equitable educational reform. Through a gender responsive approach, schools play a critical role in reducing female dropout rates, expanding participation in science and leadership, and strengthening literacy related to reproductive health and nutrition, which contribute to Goals 4 and 5. Integrating equality values also generates cross sector impacts: gender sensitive education enhances health literacy, environmental awareness, and equitable global collaboration (Goals 6 through 8). Thus, gender sensitive education is not merely a pedagogical strategy but a strategic mechanism for achieving equitable, healthy, and sustainable human development as mandated in the MDGs (Malik et al., 2025).

Implementing the operational framework for MDG integration in schools requires systematic work across seven core components: curriculum, student support and child protection mechanisms, school culture, health or WASH initiatives, community partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and human resource development. The curriculum serves as the primary instrument for integrating MDG themes and gender equality into learning processes, while student support mechanisms build awareness, expand nonspecified career pathways, and provide safe channels for reporting gender-based violence. School culture and governance foster a participatory environment that enables female leadership and breaks down gender stigma (Nkosi, 2024). Collaboration with school health units, community health centers, and NGOs strengthens health literacy and access to gender friendly facilities. Meanwhile, monitoring and evaluation using baseline, midline, and endline indicators ensure measurable progress. Human resource development through GESI training for teachers and staff is essential for sustainability. With comprehensive implementation of these seven components, schools can function as microlevel sites for transforming MDG values and ensuring that education acts as a driver of gender equality and human development in the global era.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

### 4.1 Research Implications

The implications of this study highlight the need for measurable, systemic change at the school level. Key actions include conducting curriculum and teaching material audits to eliminate stereotypes and incorporate cross gender role models; strengthening teacher and counselor capacity through tiered GESI training, guidelines for unbiased language, and agency oriented counseling SOPs with secure reporting channels and rapid responses for gender based violence; regulating fair governance of student organizations through job rotation quotas, female leadership mentoring, and balanced performance indicators; aligning curricula and learning projects with SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 using annual achievement indicators; building collaboration among schools, parents, and communities to challenge domestic norms that restrict female students; and implementing data driven monitoring and evaluation, including

baseline, midline, and endline measurements, to ensure that strengthening gender responsive values enhances student agency and contributes meaningfully to achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the era of globalization

#### **4.2 Research Contributions**

This research contributes simultaneously to four areas: theoretically, by integrating a gender perspective into a responsive education framework explicitly linked to the global development agenda (MDGs/SDGs), thereby enriching the conceptualization of gender-responsive values at the student level; methodologically, through the application of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, which combines cross-dimensional evidence (text, discursive practices, and social practices) while differentiating urban-rural contexts to produce a sharper analysis of power relations in schools; empirically, by mapping subtle forms of bias in teaching materials, iconography, and guidance counseling practices, while identifying effective practices that strengthen student agency; and practical-policy-wise, by offering a package of implementable recommendations covering curriculum audits, GESI training for teachers and counselors, fair participation governance, secure KBG reporting channels, and curriculum mapping to SDG 4.7 and 5 with annual achievement indicators, thereby providing schools with a measurable blueprint to foster gender-responsive values and contribute meaningfully to development outcomes in the era of globalization

### **5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

#### **5.1 Research Limitations**

The limitations of this study primarily stem from its qualitative-contextual nature using Critical Discourse Analysis. Consequently, the findings are strongly influenced by the characteristics of the schools and local culture and cannot be generalized without caution. The purposive selection of documents and sites may introduce selection bias, while interview data is susceptible to social desirability effects, and classroom observations may be affected by observer presence. The reliability of discourse coding is constrained by limited time for extensive inter-coder agreement testing. Furthermore, the relationship with MDGs/SDGs indicators was not measured quantitatively, so evidence of contribution to development achievements remains inferential. Access to certain sensitive artifacts, such as KBG cases, was also limited due to ethical considerations, resulting in uneven depth of analysis on specific issues.

#### **5.2 Recommendation for Future Research Direction**

Future studies should consider mixed-methods designs, longitudinal tracking, broader location variation including urban, rural, and peri-urban areas, and integration of quantitative SDG 4.7 and SDG 5 indicators to enhance external validity and test the causal impact of gender-responsive education interventions. Specifically, research could adopt longitudinal mixed-methods designs to assess changes in gender-responsive values among students at baseline, midline, and endline, combined with quasi-experimental approaches such as difference-in-differences or matched controls or ethically phased trials to evaluate the causal impact of gender-responsive curricula and guidance counseling services.

### **6. CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that gender-sensitive education is a strategic prerequisite for strengthening gender responsiveness among students in the context of globalization. Critical Discourse Analysis reveals persistent disparities at multiple levels: representation at the text level in teaching materials, pseudo-neutrality at the discursive practice level where equal treatment fails to meet specific needs, and the reinforcement of masculine leadership norms at the social practice level. Nevertheless, early signs of positive change are evident, including increased critical awareness among students, more cross-stereotypical career counseling practices, and initial efforts to revise learning materials.

These findings position schools as the locus of change closest to students' experiences. Strengthening gender-responsive values is most effective when systematically integrated into curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and student participation governance, while also being supported by safe KBG protection SOPs and rapid response mechanisms. Explicit links to the global development agenda, particularly SDG 4.7 for education for sustainable development and SDG 5 for gender equality, should be operationalized through curriculum mapping, annual achievement indicators, and contextual learning projects, ensuring that schools' contributions to development achievements go beyond slogans.

Substantively, this study contributes a conceptual-empirical framework for the institutionalization of gender-responsive education and offers an actionable roadmap including teaching material audits, tiered GESI training for teachers and counselors, fair participation policies, expanded dissemination channels, and strengthened school-

parent-community collaboration. Given the contextual limitations and potential biases inherent in qualitative data, findings should be generalized cautiously. Going forward, longitudinal studies and mixed-methods design that quantitatively measure SDG indicators will enhance evidence of causal impact, strengthen external validity, and ensure that strengthening gender-responsive values genuinely fosters student agency and contributes meaningfully to the achievement of development goals in the era of globalization.

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## Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Banu Ramanan: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft, analysis of research results. Mua'zam Mohamad: Conceptualization Writing - Review & Editing.

## Declaration of GenAI in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that certain sections of the article titled "Gender Perspectives in Education: Strengthening Gender-Responsive Values to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the Globalization Era" were assisted by Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), specifically for language editing, paraphrasing, sentence-structure refinement, and improving text readability. All ideas, arguments, research findings, and data interpretations are entirely the authors' own. GenAI was not used to generate data, conduct analyses, or replace the authors' scientific reasoning. The authors have carefully reviewed all parts that involved GenAI assistance to ensure accuracy, academic integrity, and compliance with ethical standards of scholarly publication. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JGMDS Generative AI \(GenAI\) Policies](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no significant competing financial, professional or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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